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PRESS RELEASES

UW School of Medicine and Public Health: UW Schools, State Legislative Council Join Forces to Improve Communications on Health Policy

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CONTACT: Lisa Brunette, UW School of Medicine and Public Health
608-263-5830

MADISON – As state leaders prepare to analyze and address Wisconsin's daunting health care challenges, two University of Wisconsin-Madison schools and the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council are launching an innovative partnership to forge a stronger link between the worlds of policy-making and scholarly research. The goals of the partnership are twofold: to provide decision-makers with the best available evidence for crafting solutions to health care issues, and to increase the relevance of UW research by incorporating real-world issues into the research agenda of the schools' faculty.

The project is jointly funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Fund and UW-Madison.

The UW School of Medicine and Public Health's Population Health Institute and the La Follette School of Public Affairs are partners with the Legislative Council in the project, "Advancing Evidence-Based Health Policy in Wisconsin." The project's first formal event, a symposium on new approaches to health care coverage and cost control, will be held in late January.

"The state of Wisconsin has a wealth of researchers in health care and in the public policy that shapes how health care is organized, financed and delivered," says Terry C. Anderson, Legislative Council director. "But, while there have always been informal contacts between state government and the UW, the immense challenges of designing health care policy call for a stronger link between these two worlds. This project really seeks to bridge two cultures that will each benefit immensely from systematic exchange."

"This is a powerful way to use the Wisconsin Idea to improve the lives of state residents," says Chancellor John D. Wiley. "The partnership builds a meaningful connection between UW researchers and state policymakers to attack one of this nation's most significant issues."

The partnership will begin by creating opportunities for representatives of business and government to sit down together, share information and begin to understand "the other side of the fence." The schools and council plan to host forums on specific issues, so that legislators and others can obtain non-partisan information on key issues and discuss them in a non-confrontational atmosphere. Also envisioned are symposiums with invited speakers and "methods exchange" meetings in which researchers can learn how to make their work more useful to state government leaders and those leaders in turn will learn how research projects are designed and implemented.

"The goal is to build on and expand our previous experience in translating health policy and public health research into practice," said Pat Remington, MD, director of the Department of Population Health Sciences' Population Health Institute.

"This is the type of project La Follette excels at: giving legislators useful, ground-level information, based on hard evidence and research of what works and what doesn't," said Barbara (Bobbi) Wolfe, director of UW-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs. "This is the Wisconsin Idea at its best, where we help legislators make decisions based on analysis from research. And we learn the important issues facing legislators, an opportunity which will inform our research and teaching."

Dean Robert Golden of UW School of Medicine and Public Health said the effort supports not only the School's goals of addressing the health of populations within the state but also will help ensure that elected officials, business leaders and state agency staff have the benefit of sound and timely research on which to base decisions in health care.



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